

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6622
INFO AMCONSUL DURBAN
AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L CAPE TOWN 0084

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, SF
SUBJECT: VORSTER AND EGLIN SABC INTERVIEWS

1. SABC CARRIED BRIEF INTERVIEWS WITH PRIME MINISTER JOHN VORSTER AND OPPOSITION LEADER COLIN EGLIN ON JAN. 22. VORSTER STATED FLATLY THAT NO LEGISLATION ON NEW CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES WAS LIKELY DURING THE 1978 SESSION OF PARLIAMENT. AS REASONS FOR THIS DELAY, HE STATED THAT FURTHER CONSULTATIONS WITH COLOREDS AND INDIANS WERE STILL NEEDED, AND THAT IT WOULD TAKE THE LAW ADVISERS A LONG TIME TO DRAFT THE NECESSARY LEGISLATION. ASKED HOW THE SESSION WOULD REFLECT THE ELECTORATES' REJECTION OF FOREIGN INTERFERENCE, VORSTER REPLIED THAT HE DID NOT THINK THIS FACTOR WOULD BE REFLECTED MUCH DURING THE CURRENT SESSION. NEVERTHELESS, HE ADDED, "WE HAVE RECEIVED A MANDATE AND WE WILL CERTAINLY ACT IN TERMS OF THAT MANDATE. ...WE WILL NOT ALLOW OUTSIDE PRESSURE TO DICTATE TO US WHAT WE SHOULD DO."

2. EGLIN, IN HIS EQUALLY BRIEF STATEMENT, SAID THAT
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THE PROGRESSIVE FEDERAL PARTY WOULD USE ITS POSITION AS OFFICIAL OPPOSITION TO CONCENTRATE ON THE KEY ISSUES FACING SOUTH AFRICA. THESE ISSUES, HE SAID CONCERNED RACE RELATIONS, AND SPECIFICALLY THE QUESTIONS OF HOW TO ELIMINATE DISCRIMINATION, AND HOW TO SHARE POWER, RESPONSIBILITY AND DECISION-MAKING.

3. COMMENT: DURING THE NOVEMBER ELECTION CAMPAIGN, THE NP ASSURED ITS SUPPORTERS THAT THE DRAFT CONSTITUTION WAS A "TAKE IT OR LEAVE IT" PROPOSITION FOR THE COLOREDS AND INDIANS, AND VORSTER HIMSELF REPORTEDLY TOLD LEADERS OF THESE TWO COMMUNITIES THAT NO BASIC CHANGES COULD BE MADE. CONNIE MULDER AND OTHER GOVERNMENT LEADERS PREVIOUSLY INDICATED THAT CONSIDERATION OF THE NEW CONSTITUTION WOULD BE DELAYED UNTIL NEXT YEAR. VORSTER'S COMMITMENT TO CONSULTATION WITH THE COLORED AND INDIAN COMMUNITIES ON THE DRAFT IS INTERESTING. IT SEEMS INTENDED TO CONVEY AT LEAST THE IMPRESSION TO THESE COMMUNITIES THAT THEY WILL HAVE SOME INPUT IN REVISING THE DOCUMENT.
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